

# THE EXAMEN

## A PRAYER PRACTICE

### HEARING GOD WEEK THREE

The Examen is a simple prayer practice that helps us become more aware of God's loving presence at work in our lives by regularly reflecting on the events of our days. The practice was first developed by St. Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuit Order of priests. While it has been adapted many times over the years, the core tenets and purpose of the practice remain the same. Examen is a Latin word meaning "examination". When adopted as a daily habit, the Examen helps us tune into the slow but certain work of God throughout our days and over more extended periods of time.

#### 1 MAKE SPACE

The first step of incorporating any new practice into your life is to pick a regular time of day when you would like to do it. You'll need anywhere from five to thirty minutes for the Examen, depending on how much time you'd like to commit. You might choose to do it at the start of each day, at midday, in the evening as a transition from work, or at night before bed.

Whatever time of day you choose, attempt to remain consistent with that time for at least three days a week, for at least two weeks, to start building a habit. You can also attach the practice to a cue, or another routine activity you already do at that same time of day, e.g., after brushing your teeth at night or making your coffee in the morning.

#### 2 REFLECT + PRAY

Once you've settled on a time and are ready to practice the Examen, begin by inviting God into your time of prayer and asking for the grace to see yourself honestly as you review your day (or the previous day). Then, at a meditative pace, review your day using the five steps below as a guide. You can either prayerfully meditate on your responses or journal as you move through the reflections.

**1. Express gratitude**

Recall your day and name anything for which you are particularly grateful. Thank God for these gifts.

**2. Review the day**

Review the events of your day. Move from morning to night and notice where you felt God's presence. (No detail is too small or mundane.) Were there any invitations to grow in faith, hope or charity? How did you respond to these invitations?

**3. Name your sorrows**

Name those things from the day for which you are sorry. Include both actions and regrets, things you did or did not do.

**4. Seek forgiveness**

Ask God to forgive you. If there is someone you may have hurt and with whom you should reconcile, resolve now to reconcile with them and ask their forgiveness.

**5. Ask for grace for tomorrow**

Thank God for the gift of your life and this day. Then, ask for the grace you need to see God's presence more clearly and to conform yourself to Jesus Christ more closely tomorrow.